

## Sūrah Jinn

### Central Theme, Relationship with Previous *Sūrah* and Analysis of the Discourse

This *sūrah* is the counterpart of Sūrah Nūḥ the previous *sūrah*. Both form a complimentary pair. There is no basic difference between the central themes of both *sūrahs*. In the previous *sūrah*, a soul-stirring and a soul-searching picture is presented before the leaders of the Quraysh of the stubbornness and arrogance shown by the leaders of Noah's nation, of the way they closed their ears to the calls of their Messenger and of the fate they reached. Now in this *sūrah*, they are being shown that the very Qur'ān from which they feel such great aversion cast such a potent influence on a group of jinn that it embarked upon spreading its message among its brethren. So aversive were they in this regard that they would thrust their fingers in their ears and leap at the person who would recite it out to them and disgustfully run away when they would hear it. The incident of the jinn hearing the Qur'ān as mentioned in this *sūrah* has already been alluded to in Sūrah Aḥqāf (46:29-32). I have already mentioned in the *tafsīr* of these verses why this incident has been related before the leaders of the Quraysh. The first reason was to incite their sense of honour: if the jinn, who are not even the direct addressees of the Qur'ān could be so deeply moved on accidentally hearing it, how is it that these leaders of the Quraysh for which the whole Qur'ān has been specifically revealed are showing indifference to it; day and night, a messenger of God is calling them towards it, while they are so unfortunate that instead of opening their hearts to his calls they have become avowed enemies of those who are presenting it. The second reason for relating this incident before the leaders of the Quraysh was to assure the Prophet (sws): if the miscreants of his nation were not treasuring the Qur'ān, he should not be sad; people whose hearts are dead will not benefit from it however much they try; on the other hand, those who even have the slightest ability to appreciate the truth will benefit from it even if they accidentally chance by to hear it whether they are its addressees or not and whether any arrangement is made to read it out to them or not.

People who are only slaves to their faculties of sensation and who deny the very existence of things beyond these faculties will not be effected by the manner in which a group of jinn were moved by the Qur'ān; they are

---

not even addressed here. The addressees here are the Idolaters of the Quraysh who were not so dumb as to believe only in things they could see or touch. They not only believed in the existence of the jinn, they had also set up a whole system of soothsaying through which they maintained contacts with them. For this reason, the Qur'ān has narrated to them this incident as something very important. If they want, they too can benefit from this information. Through soothsayers, they would receive various news from the miscreants among the jinn. The Qur'ān has presented before them a report of the righteous among them so that those among these leaders of the Quraysh who have the ability to distinguish between good and evil are guided to embrace faith. The Qur'ān has related before them some facts of the unknown and unseen world so that the seekers of the truth can gain benefit from this. Although the slaves to the sense faculties will call all this a product of one's imagination, providence does not deprive people of its blessings if some unworthy elements fail to recognize and value it.

### Text and Translation

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

قُلْ أُوحِيَ إِلَيَّ أَنَّهُ اسْتَمَعَ نَفَرٌ مِّنَ الْجِنِّ فَقَالُوا إِنَّا سَمِعْنَا قُرْآنًا عَجَبًا (١) يَهْدِي إِلَى الرُّشْدِ فَآمَنَّا بِهِ وَلَنْ نُشْرِكَ بِرَبِّنَا أَحَدًا (٢) وَأَنَّهُ تَعَالَى جَدُّ رَبِّنَا مَا اتَّخَذَ صَاحِبَةً وَلَا وَلَدًا (٣) وَأَنَّهُ كَانَ يَقُولُ سَفِيهُنَا عَلَى اللَّهِ شَطَطًا (٤) وَأَنَّا ظَنَنَّا أَن لَّنْ تَقُولَ الْإِنسُ وَالْجِنُّ عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا (٥) وَأَنَّهُ كَانَ رِجَالٌ مِّنَ الْإِنسِ يَعُوذُونَ بِرِجَالٍ مِّنَ الْجِنِّ فَزَادُوهُمْ رَهَقًا (٦) وَأَنَّهُمْ ظَنُّوا كَمَا ظَنَنْتُمْ أَن لَّنْ يَبْعَثَ اللَّهُ أَحَدًا (٧) وَأَنَّا لَمَسْنَا السَّمَاءَ فَوَجَدْنَاهَا مِلْئَتْ حَرَسًا شَدِيدًا وَشُهَبًا (٨) وَأَنَّا كُنَّا نَقْعُدُ مِنْهَا مَقَاعِدَ لِلسَّمْعِ فَمَن يَسْتَمِعِ الْآنَ يَجِدْ لَهُ شِهَابًا رَّصَدًا (٩) وَأَنَّا لَا نَدْرِي أَشَرٌّ أُرِيدَ بِمَن فِي الْأَرْضِ أَمْ أَرَادَ بِهِمْ رَبُّهُمْ رَشَدًا (١٠) وَأَنَّا مِنَّا الصَّالِحُونَ وَمِمَّا دُونَ ذَلِكَ كُنَّا طَرَائِقَ قِدَدًا (١١) وَأَنَّا ظَنَنَّا أَن لَّنْ تُعْجِزَ اللَّهُ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَنْ نُعْجِزَهُ هَرَبًا (١٢) وَأَنَّا لَمَّا سَمِعْنَا الْهُدَى آمَنَّا بِهِ فَمَن يُؤْمِن بِرَبِّهِ فَلَا يَخَافُ بَخْسًا وَلَا رَهَقًا (١٣) وَأَنَّا مِنَّا الْمُسْلِمُونَ وَمِمَّا الْقَاسِطُونَ فَمَنْ أَسْلَمَ فَأُولَئِكَ تَحَرَّوْا رَشَدًا (١٤) وَأَمَّا الْقَاسِطُونَ فَكَانُوا لِجَهَنَّمَ حَطَبًا (١٥) وَالْوَلَوِ اسْتَقَامُوا عَلَى الطَّرِيقَةِ لَأَسْقَيْنَهُمْ مَّاءً غَدَقًا (١٦) لِنَفْتِنَهُمْ فِيهِ وَمَنْ يُعْرِضْ عَنْ ذِكْرِ رَبِّهِ يَسْلُكْهُ عَذَابًا صَعَدًا (١٧) وَأَن

الْمَسَاجِدَ لِلَّهِ فَلَا تَدْعُوا مَعَ اللَّهِ أَحَدًا (١٨) وَأَنَّهُ لَمَّا قَامَ عَبْدُ اللَّهِ يَدْعُوهُ كَادُوا يَكُونُونَ عَلَيْهِ لِبَدًا (١٩) قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَدْعُو رَبِّي وَلَا أُشْرِكُ بِهِ أَحَدًا (٢٠) قُلْ إِنِّي لَا أَمْلِكُ لَكُمْ ضَرًّا وَلَا رَشَدًا (٢١) قُلْ إِنِّي لَنْ يُجِيرَنِي مِنَ اللَّهِ أَحَدٌ وَلَنْ أَجِدَ مِنْ دُونِهِ مُلْتَحَدًا (٢٢) إِلَّا بَلَاغًا مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرِسَالَاتِهِ وَمَن يَعْصِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَإِنَّ لَهُ نَارَ جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدًا فِيهَا أَبَدًا (٢٣) حَتَّىٰ إِذَا رَأَوْا مَا يُوعَدُونَ فَسَيَعْلَمُونَ مَنْ أَضَعَفَ نَاصِرًا وَأَقَلُّ عَدَدًا (٢٤) قُلْ إِن أَدْرِي أَقْرَبُ مَّا تُوْعَدُونَ أَمْ يَجْعَلُ لَهُ رَبِّي أَمَدًا (٢٥) عَالِمُ الْغَيْبِ فَلَا يُظْهِرُ عَلَىٰ غَيْبِهِ أَحَدًا (٢٦) إِلَّا مَن ارْتَضَىٰ مِنْ رَسُولٍ فَإِنَّهُ يَسْلُكُ مِنْ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِ رَصَدًا (٢٧) لِيَعْلَمَ أَن قَدْ أَبْلَغُوا رِسَالَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ وَأَحَاطَ بِمَا لَدَيْهِمْ وَأَحْصَىٰ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ عَدَدًا (٢٨)

In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Ever Merciful.

Tell them: "It has been revealed to me that when a group of jinn listened to the Qur'ān, they said to their people: 'We have heard a Qur'ān wondrous, which shows guidance to the right path; so we have professed faith in it and we will not by any means associate any one with our Lord and that exalted is the majesty of our Lord; He has neither taken a wife for Himself nor does He have any children. And that this foolish [leader] of ours has been saying absolutely false things about Allāh. And that we thought that no man or jinn could forge a lie against Allah. And that there were some among men who had been seeking refuge with some among the *jinn* so they only increased them in their rebellion. And that like you, they also thought that Allah would never raise the dead. And we deeply observed the heavens and found it filled with stern guards and meteors. And we were able to sit in some of its stations to eavesdrop, but now whoever tries to eavesdrop finds a meteor waiting for him. And that we do not know whether any ill has been intended for those on earth or whether their Lord has intended something good for them. And that there are pious among us also and some who are otherwise; our paths are separate. And that we acknowledge that we cannot escape God's grasp by setting off to some place in this earth or by running away somewhere in the heavens. And that when we heard words of guidance we believed in it. So he who believes in his God their Lord will have no fear of any loss or any injustice. And that there are obedient among us and also disobedient; so those who are obedient will find themselves on the right path, and those who are disobedient will become the firewood of Hell.'" (1-15)

And it has also been revealed to me that if these [Quraysh] had adhered to the straight path, We would have bestowed on them rain in abundance

so that We could test them by this, and those who turn away from the Reminder of their Lord, He will put them through an ever-increasing torment. And that mosques are only for the worship of Allah; so invoke not any one with Allah. And that when this servant of Allah stands to invoke only Him, it seems as if they will rush upon him. Tell them: "I invoke my Lord only and will not associate partners with Him." Tell them: "I have no authority to harm or benefit." Tell them: "None can protect me from Allah nor can I find any refuge besides Him" Only to inform you from God and to communicate His messages to you. And those who disobey Allah and His Prophet shall abide forever in the fire of Hell. Until these people behold that what they are being warned of, then they shall know who is the weakest in help and who is the fewest in numbers. Tell them: "I do not know whether that with which you are being threatened is imminent or whether My Lord will postpone it a little more." Only He knows the unknown, and He never reveals His unknown to anyone. As for those whom He chooses as His Messengers, He guards them from behind and from the front that He may know if they have delivered the messages of their Lord; and He surrounds them from all sides and keeps count of all their things. (16-28)

### Explanation

قُلْ أُوحِيَ إِلَيَّ أَنَّهُ اسْتَمَعَ نَفَرٌ مِّنَ الْجِنِّ فَقَالُوا إِنَّا سَمِعْنَا قُرْآنًا عَجَبًا<sup>1</sup>

The words قُلْ أُوحِيَ (tell them) clearly indicate the fact that the impressions of the jinn cited in this *sūrah* are not narrated to the Prophet (sws) directly from their tongue; these impressions have been revealed to the Prophet (sws) by the Almighty. A group of jinn chanced by the Prophet (sws) while he was reciting the Qur'ān. They were so moved by it that they intently listened to what was being recited. Such was the pronounced effect of its wondrous words on them that they embarked upon calling their own brethren towards it.

When did this incident happen? It is difficult to give a certain answer to this question. In my opinion, this is a detailed version of the same incident referred to rather concisely in *Sūrah Aḥqāf*. I have already referred to its background and context in the *tafsīr* of that *sūrah* in the light of various narratives. These impressions of the jinn have been conveyed to the Prophet (sws) so that he informs his people of them. The implication is that the very Qur'ān which they are treating in such a

---

1. Tell them: It has been revealed to me that when a group of jinn listened to Qur'ān, they said to their people: We have heard a Qur'ān wondrous.

disdainful manner by shutting their ears to it, and set off to become the enemies of its reciter even though it was specifically revealed for them had a profound influence on some bright jinn. So potent was this influence that they became such ardent fans of it that they embarked upon calling their people towards it even though they were not the direct addressees of this Book.

The word **قُلْ** clearly shows that the Prophet (sw) has been informed of these impressions of the jinn so that he conveys them to the leaders of the Quraysh to awaken their sense of honour. In a passing way, these words also assure the Prophet (sws) that he should not feel sad if his message is not receiving recognition by such worthless people. If they are not valuing this Book, then neither is the Book to be blamed nor the Prophet (sws); it is because of their own bad nature.

The words **فَقَالُوا إِنَّا سَمِعْنَا قُرْآنًا عَجَبًا** depict the message the jinn conveyed to their nation. In other words, they did not merely praise the words they heard; they thought it was a natural requirement of recognizing the truth and of being well-wishers to their people that they should share with them the divine favour they had been with by God.

The word **عَجَبٌ** is a verbal noun and in contrast to **عَجِيبٌ** has more emphasis and exaggeration in it. The jinn used this word for the Qur'ān's efficacy, forcefulness and being replete with wisdom. In Arabic, this word does not mean "strange" (which is its Urdu meaning); it expresses the effectiveness and beauty of something. In Sūrah Aḥqāf, this aspect is discussed in the following words:

قَالُوا يَا قَوْمَنَا إِنَّا سَمِعْنَا كِتَابًا أُنْزِلَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مُوسَىٰ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ يَهْدِي إِلَى  
الْحَقِّ وَإِلَىٰ طَرِيقٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ (٣٠:٤٦)

They said: "O people! We have just been listening to a book revealed after the time of Moses in confirmation of the confirming previous predictions and pointing to the truth and to a straight path." (46:30)

It is also indirectly evident from the verse under discussion that the jinn are not only conversant with their own language, they are also conversant with the language of the human beings belonging to the area where the jinn live and that also among them are those who are *connoisseurs* of this language.

يَهْدِي إِلَى الرُّشْدِ فَآمَنَّا بِهِ وَلَنْ نُشْرِكَ بِرَبِّنَا أَحَدًا<sup>2</sup> (٢)

This verse explains how the Qur'ān is so effective as referred to by the word عَجَبُ of the previous verse: this Book is guiding people to the truth which is acceptable to the heart of every good-natured person. In the verse of Sūrah Aḥqāf, the words used are: يَهْدِي إِلَى الْحَقِّ وَإِلَى طَرِيقٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ. Here the word رُشْدٌ comprehensively covers this subject. It encompasses all basic beliefs and virtues which are innately found in human nature.

Here the word رُشْدٌ (*rushd*) comprehensively covers this subject. It encompasses all basic beliefs and virtues which are innately found in human nature. If a person does not pervert his nature by wrongly using his will, it guides him to the straight path. If, at times, he does commit a blemish, a little reminder and admonition brings him back on the right track; the only condition is that he should value and recognize this feature of his nature and not be led away by his base desires. The highest status occupied in this *rushd* is that of *tawḥīd*. It is the fountainhead of all basic beliefs and deeds and on it depends their correctness as well.

The obligation owed by the jinn to the رُشْدُ is expressed by the words: فَاْمَنَّا بِهِ. It is the natural right of being blessed with this guidance to profess faith in it. The jinn accepted it with sincerity.

The primary and foremost part of رُشْدُ is *tawḥīd*, as indicated earlier. Consequently, the jinn while stating a requirement of this رُشْدُ expressed that it was not possible for them now to associate partners with God. The Qur'ānic words used are وَلَنْ نُشْرِكَ بِرَبِّنَا أَحَدًا.

It needs to be appreciated that all basic beliefs and virtues are common not only among all human beings but also the jinn. The Qur'ān has in fact clarified that they are common to every cognizant being of this universe. The difference in directives between human beings and jinn relates to the social sphere only. There is no reason for any difference between them as far as beliefs in *tawḥīd*, in the Day of Judgement and in the reward and punishment which will take place on that Day as well as in morals and morality. Thus it is these things which are mentioned here. The Qur'ān also invited people in the initial period of the Makkan life of the Prophet (sws) to these basic requirements ingrained in human nature.

وَأَنَّهُ تَعَالَى جَدُّ رَبِّنَا مَا اتَّخَذَ صَاحِبَةً وَلَا وَلَدًا<sup>3</sup> (٣)

Expressed in this verse is a further explanation of their statement

2. Which shows guidance to the right path; so we have professed faith in it and we will not by any means associate any one with our Lord.

3. And that exalted is the majesty of our Lord; He has neither taken a wife for Himself nor does He have any children.

وَلَنْ نُشْرَكَ بِرَبِّنَا أَحَدًا (and we will not by any means associate any one with our Lord) cited in the previous verse. It has become absolutely evident to them that so exalted is their Lord that He does not require any family. Foolish are the people who attribute such things to Him. He neither has a wife nor any children.

The word تَعَالَى signifies “greatness, grandeur and high status”. The implication is that He is so lofty that no one can be His peer or equal in status to Him. He is solitary and peerless and is not dependent on anything. He has no equal and is matchless. Although this is a statement of the jinn and hence should be related to the sentence فَقَالُوا إِنَّا سَمِعْنَا (they said: We heard ...); however, since these impressions of the jinn did not come directly to the Prophet’s knowledge and were revealed to him by God this statement should be related to قُلْ أُوْحِيَ إِلَيَّ أَنَّهُ (tell them: it has been revealed to me that ...) as are all subsequent statements of the jinn.

وَأَنَّهُ كَانَ يَفُولُ سَفِيهًا عَلَى اللَّهِ شَطَطًا<sup>4</sup>

The word سَفِيهٍ means “foolish”. Here the jinn have used it for their leader because his foolishness became evident to them after they had heard the Qur’ān.

The word شَطَطٌ means something which does not conform to justice and truth.

When the jinn were fully convinced of *tawhīd*, they informed their people that their foolish leader would ascribe absolutely false and baseless allegations to the majesty of God. Amongst these allegations was that He had a wife and children and that such and such were His favorite sons and such and such were His favorite daughters; however, the Qur’ān they have heard clearly shows that all these were false allegations concocted by their false leader. So they repented from all such nonsensical things and invited their people too to repent from such things and not be lured away by this foolish leader.

It is evident from this verse that the group of jinn mentioned in these verses was from their common masses. They did tread the path they were led into by their leaders; however, once the truth became evident to them they stopped obeying their leaders with the spark of courage that was ignited in them by true faith, and began treading the straight path. The common masses of the Quraysh are informed of these impressions of the jinn through the Prophet (sws) so that they too break the shackles of blindly following their leaders and so that they are inculcated with the

---

4. And that this foolish [leader] of ours has been saying absolutely false things about Allāh.

confidence of relying on their own vision and intellect.

وَأَنَّا ظَنَنَّا أَن لَّن تَقُولَ الْإِنسُ وَالْجِنُّ عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا (٥)<sup>5</sup>

Expressed in this verse is the misconception they were led into by their leaders. They thought that men or jinn could never impute such falsities to God that He had appointed certain partners and also regarded them to be worthy of worship; on the contrary, these people were audacious enough to do such things and they were lured away by them.

Through these words they wanted to convey to their masses that they should not blindly follow their religious pundits by being deceived about their sanctity. They should use their senses lest these pundits cause them an irreparable loss.

وَأَنَّهُ كَانَ رِجَالٌ مِّنَ الْإِنسِ يَعُوذُونَ بِرِجَالٍ مِّنَ الْجِنِّ فَزَادُوهُمْ رَهَقًا (٦)<sup>6</sup>

This is another piece of information they divulged to their people.

The real meaning of the word رَهَقٌ is “to burden someone with what he cannot bear.” It was from this original meaning that it came to be used for “sin, oppression, cruelty and usurping rights”. Consequently, in verse thirteen it is used for injustice.

Generally, people have interpreted this verse to mean that some foolish human beings took refuge with the jinn and thereby made these jinn arrogant and supercilious. This interpretation does not seem to be correct. Firstly, the discourse does not give any useful information and secondly, the word رَهَقٌ exceeds its real meaning in this interpretation. In my opinion, the subject of the verb زَادُوا is رِجَالٌ مِّنَ الْجِنِّ and the antecedent of the pronoun هُمْ is رِجَالٌ مِّنَ الْإِنسِ. In other words, some foolish men sought refuge with the jinn so that they could save them from calamities sent by the jinn; however, when the jinn saw that they were luring some people away, then instead of protecting these people from their evil they lured them into it.

The Idolaters of Arabia had the superstition that the jinn were a means of finding out the news of the unknown and the unseen world. As a result, a whole system of soothsaying which was totally based on lies and deception had come into being. Typically, a soothsayer would tell a person under his lure that a certain jinn is angry with him and that if he did not do a particular sacrifice or make a vow, then this jinn would cause him some harm. As a result, this person would obey the

5. And that we thought that no man or jinn could forge a lie against Allāh.

6. And that there were some among men who had been seeking refuge with some among the jinn so they only increased them in their rebellion.



soothsayer. So much so, in order to please the jinn, foolish people at the behest of these soothsayers would at times even sacrifice their children. This has been alluded to in Sūrah An‘ām.

Another superstition with which they thought these Idolaters of Arabia were afflicted was that every valley and every mountain was inhabited by some specific group of jinn. If ever circumstances arose that someone had to spend the night at some such place, then it was deemed necessary to seek the refuge of the leader of these jinn. In case this refuge was not sought, there was a strong chance that these jinn would send some calamity on them. Consequently, in the age of ignorance when the Arabs would spend a night in some valley they would invoke the chief jinn of that valley and would think that they had sought refuge with him. Obviously, this was another needless burden which such people would have to bear because of this superstition.

It is to such superstitions that the pious jinn mentioned in this *sūrah* have alluded. The objective is to show that because of a lack of comprehension of the concept of *tawhīd* an alliance has come into being between some foolish human beings and some mischievous jinn. The purpose was also to show the various spiritual and material evils were as a result coming into existence to uproot which the Almighty had revealed this Book.

The reason that the word رَجَالٌ is not defined can be both for magnification (*tafkhīm*) and derision (*taḥqīr*). In other words, the verse can be interpreted in two ways: a) some foolish among human beings would invoke and seek refuge with some foolish among the jinn and b) some mischievous among human beings would invoke and seek refuge with some mischievous among the jinn. In fact, it would be totally in accordance with the principles of Arabic if this verse is interpreted thus: some foolish among human beings would invoke and seek refuge with some mischievous among the jinn.

وَأَنَّهُمْ ظَنُّوا كَمَا ظَنَنْتُمْ أَن لَّن يَبْعَثَ اللَّهُ أَحَدًا ۖ<sup>7</sup>

After *tawhīd*, the jinn have now pointed out the misconceptions of both groups – humankind and jinns – regarding the Hereafter. They told their brethren that just as they were in the misconception that the Almighty would not raise their dead, some men have also remained in this misconception. The implication is that one of the objective for which the Qur’ān has been revealed is to dispel this misconception of people.

Some people have interpreted this verse differently. They think that these jinn were giving a different piece of information to their brethren

---

7. And that like you, they also thought that Allah would never raise the dead.

viz: just as they were under the wrong impression that now the Almighty is not going to send any prophet similarly some among mankind were also under this wrong impression.

Although the words of this verse can be interpreted thus, however a question arises on it. The foremost addressees of the Qur'ān – whether they were from the Ishmaelites or the Israelites – were waiting for a prophet because of prediction made by earlier prophets. Though the People of the Book tried to hide these predictions but they were not able to deny them. As far as the Ishmaelites were concerned, they did not have a clear conception of this awaited prophet because of being unlettered, yet they too did not deny him with certainty. Consequently, at some places in the Qur'ān, they have been condemned for a particular attitude they had adopted: before the advent of this awaited prophet, they had claimed that if the Almighty would send a prophet from within them they would be the first ones to accept him and the ones to follow his guidance the most; however, when the Almighty blessed them with this favour, they became his opponents.

وَأَنَّا لَمَسْنَا السَّمَاءَ فَوَجَدْنَاهَا مُلِئَتْ حَرَسًا شَدِيدًا وَشُهُبًا (٨) وَأَنَّا كُنَّا نَقْعُدُ مِنْهَا مَقَاعِدَ  
لِلْمَسْمُوعِ فَمَنْ يَسْتَمِعِ الْآنَ يَجِدْ لَهُ شِهَابًا رَصَدًا (٩)<sup>8</sup>

Mentioned in these verses is what they experienced for the very first time in this universe at the time of revelation of this Book. It has been mentioned at many places in the Qur'ān that when the devils among the jinn try to eavesdrop to gain news of the unknown and unseen world they are pelted with shooting stars. This personal experience of the jinn substantiates this information of the Qur'ān. It also shows that prior to the revelation of the Qur'ān, there was a possibility of such eavesdropping. However, at the time in which they were narrating their experience, the heavens were filled with meteors and sentinels to such an extent that the jinn were not able to infiltrate for this purpose in any manner.

Although the jinn mentioned this great change in the system of the universe they were not able to cite any reason for it. This is evident from the very next verse which says that they were unaware of the wisdom behind what was happening. However, by linking the revelation of the Qur'ān with this great change, they observed they gave the impression to the people that this change was related to the revelation of the Qur'ān.

In my opinion, their deduction was correct. It is evident from many

---

8. And we deeply observed the heavens and found it filled with stern guards and meteors. And we were able to sit in some of its stations to eavesdrop, but now whoever tries to eavesdrop finds a meteor waiting for him.

verses of the Qur'ān that the system of surveillance which the Almighty has set up in this universe to stop the jinn from intervening in divine matters became very rigorous at the time of the revelation of the Qur'ān so that this divine Book was protected from such incursions. In general, this system of surveillance has always remained in action. Even before the revelation of the Qur'ān, the devils have been pelted with meteors for such intervention; however, just as governments put roads on which royal treasure is to be transported or on which the royal cavalcade is to pass under special protection, it seems that in the time of revelation of the Qur'ān and at advent of Gabriel also the heavens had been put under special protection to stop such infiltration.

The Qur'ān has cited this information given by the jinn before the Idolaters of Arabia because these Idolaters would regard the Qur'ān to be a discourse similar to the one produced by soothsayers and that it was inspired by the jinn. By this information this blame was refuted. For its refutation, the mere statement and observation of the jinn themselves mentioned in this verse was enough.

وَأَنَّا لَا نَدْرِي أَشَرٌّ أُرِيدَ بِمَن فِي الْأَرْضِ أَمْ أَرَادَ بِهِمْ رَبُّهُمْ رَشَدًا<sup>9</sup>

These jinn were not absolutely sure about the reason behind this great change in the universe, as has been pointed out earlier. So instead of pointing out a clear-cut reason, they just expressed their uncertainty about it; they reckoned that though they did not know the real reason yet they thought that this change was a prelude to some great revolution in the earth. Whether this revolution would be advantageous or not for the inhabitants of the earth is something which only time will tell.

Though because of exercising care they did not clearly express their opinion, yet the style in which they expressed their opinion shows that they thought this change would augur well for inhabitants of the earth. Thus they mentioned that something ill may befall them in the passive voice and mentioned that something good will befall them in the active voice. I have already explained in Sūrah Kahf the difference of these two styles viz a viz holding respect and reverence for the Almighty. Here what needs to be specifically kept in consideration is that if their dominant opinion was not that something good had been intended for the inhabitants of the earth, then this opinion would also have been expressed in the passive voice like the other sentence. However, correlating the revelation of the Qur'ān and the great change that occurred in the universe, they were of the opinion that both these incidents were beneficial for the people of

---

9. And that we do not know whether any ill has been intended for those on earth or whether their Lord has intended something good for them.

the earth and it was like an union of two propitious events.

وَأَنَّا مِنَّا الصَّالِحُونَ وَمِنَّا دُونَ ذَلِكَ كُنَّا طَرَائِقَ قِدْدًا<sup>10</sup> (۱۱)

In this verse, these jinn have expressed the opinion that till that time there was no difference between good and evil in their eyes. Both were equal to them; however, the Qur'ān cleared this misconception of theirs and clarified that all of them do not follow the same path and that their paths are separate and that it is essential that they deal with people keeping in view this difference. In other words, what is implied is that the basis of association and dissociation should be belief and disbelief. It should not be bias for one's tribe or nation.

This statement of the jinn is actually a declaration of acquittal from their nation who even after their calls to accept faith remain adamant on their disbelief and polytheism. Such a declaration was made by all prophets of God before their respective nations and the righteous of all periods of time while following these prophets also made such a declaration. One prominent example of this were the companions of the cave mentioned in Sūrah Kahf.

The word طَرَائِق means "paths" and "schools of thought" and قِدْدًا means "different" and "separate".

وَأَنَّا ظَنَنَّا أَن لَّن نُّعْجِزَ اللَّهَ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَن نُّعْجِزَهُ هَرَبًا<sup>11</sup> (۱۲)

After calling their people to the truth, these words sound a warning to their people: it has also become evident to them that they are always in the grasp of God; He can seize them at any time.

In this verse, some words are suppressed on the basis of the well-known linguistic principle of parallelism. These suppressed words can be understood through the sentence structure of the verse itself. For example, in the first part of the verse the presence of the word فِي الْأَرْضِ points to the suppression of فِي السَّمَاءِ in the second part. Similarly, the presence of the word هَرَبًا in the second part points to the suppression of its counterpart in the first part. I have unveiled all these suppressions in the translation of the verse. Since this style is not common in Urdu<sup>12</sup>, the real meaning of the verse cannot be understood unless these instances of suppression are unfolded.

10. And that there are pious among us also and some who are otherwise; our paths are separate.

11. And that we acknowledge that we cannot escape God's grasp by setting off to some place in this earth or by running away somewhere in the heavens.

12. The case of English is no different. (Translator)

وَأَنَّا لَمَّا سَمِعْنَا الْهُدَى آمَنَّا بِهِ فَمَنْ يُؤْمِنُ بِرَبِّهِ فَلَا يَخَافُ بَخْسًا وَلَا رَهَقًا (١٣)<sup>13</sup>

In this verse, these jinn have presented their own example before their people regarding accepting the truth when it came their way. They thought that it was mandatory upon them to recognize the truth and so they professed faith in it. The implication is that this very attitude should be adopted by all those who have regard for the truth. The evasion of those who run away from it will bear witness that instead of following reason they wanted to follow their desires.

In the expression *فَلَا يَخَافُ بَخْسًا وَلَا رَهَقًا* the word *بَخْسٌ* means “to reduce” and the word *رَهَقٌ*, as explained earlier, means “to be unfair”. This subject is also discussed with slight variation of words in (١١٢: ٢٠) *فَلَا يَخَافُ ظُلْمًا وَلَا هَضْمًا* (so they shall fear neither wrong nor injustice, (20:112)).

By these words, they have encouraged people who have accepted the call to embrace faith: whoever will do so, should rest assured that this deal will procure no loss. The Almighty will abundantly reward them for their deeds. They should neither fear usurpation of some right nor any injustice. Whatever a person would have done will only come before him. In the Sūrah Zilzāl the words used are:

وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ خَيْرًا يَرَهُ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ شَرًّا يَرَهُ (٩٩: ٧-٨)

Then whoever has done the smallest bit of good will see it, and whoever has done the smallest bit of evil will also see it, (99:7-8))

وَأَنَّا مِنَّا الْمُسْلِمُونَ وَمِنَّا الْقَاسِطُونَ فَمَنْ أَسْلَمَ فَأُولَئِكَ تَحَرَّوْا رَشَدًا (١٤) وَأَمَّا الْقَاسِطُونَ فَكَانُوا لِجَهَنَّمَ حَطَبًا (١٥)<sup>14</sup>

In this verse, the jinn are expressing the fact that since the Almighty has given them innate awareness of good and evil, has also explained to them good and evil through His Books and as a fact of life they are also witnessing that both types of people – obedient and disobedient – are also found among them, then a natural consequence of all this is that the Almighty should not regard both these categories to be equal; in fact, those who remain obedient to Him should be worthy of Paradise and those who deviate from the truth should become the firewood of Hell.

13. And that when we heard words of guidance we believed in it. So he who believes in his God their Lord will have no fear of any loss or any injustice.

14. And that there are obedient among us and also disobedient; so those who are obedient will find themselves on the right path, and those who are disobedient will become the firewood of Hell.”

Making a distinction between good and evil is an obvious requirement of the Almighty's justice and wisdom. If this is not so, then this would mean that this world is an unattended lot whose creator regards good and evil to be equal.

وَأَلَوْ اسْتَقَامُوا عَلَى الطَّرِيقَةِ لَأَسْقَيْنَاهُم مَّاءً غَدَقًا (١٦)<sup>15</sup>

After the impressions and statements of the jinn, from here the discourse has shifted directly towards the Quraysh. I have already written while explaining the word قُل of the first verse of this *sūrah* that by this word the Prophet (sws) has been directed to communicate these views of the jinn regarding the Qur'ān and its message to the conceited and arrogant leaders of the Quraysh. After this, the Quraysh are now being directly admonished that if they had remained steadfast on the straight path, then this would not have been a loss-incurring deed; it was a very lucrative deal for them both in this world and the Hereafter. The Almighty would have blessed them with abundant rain. The words مَاءً غَدَقًا literally mean "abundant water"; however, in Arabic it connotes abundance in resources and provisions. Examples of this usage can be seen in the previous *sūrahs*. In Sūrah Nūh, the words used are:

اسْتَغْفِرُوا رَبَّكُمْ إِنَّهُ كَانَ غَفَّارًا يُرْسِلِ السَّمَاءَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِدْرَارًا وَيُمْدِدْكُمْ بِأَمْوَالٍ  
وَبَنِينَ وَيَجْعَلْ لَكُمْ جَنَّاتٍ وَيَجْعَلْ لَكُمْ أَنْهَارًا (٧١: ١٠-١٢)

Seek forgiveness from your Lord; indeed, He is ever Forgiving; He shall send down on you abundant rain from the heavens and shall strengthen you with wealth and sons and shall make for you gardens and shall bring forth for you springs of water. (71:10-12)

The verse under discussion actually dispels the misperception of the Quraysh as per which they would attribute their affluence to their deities and would fear that if they accept the calls of the Qur'ān they would be deprived of the wealth and children they have been blessed with. The implication of the verse is that it is naïve on their part to attribute this affluence to their alleged deities. All the favours are the blessing of God and if in spite of their ungrateful attitude He has still not taken away these favours from them, then if they show gratitude He will not only make them remain its recipients He will also increase these favours.

The words عَلَى الطَّرِيقَةِ refer to the straight path of *tawhīd*. It is

---

15. And it has also been revealed to me that if these [Quraysh] had adhered to the straight path, We would have bestowed on them rain in abundance.

mentioned as if it is a well known path. It is a reality and hence human nature bears witness to it, human intellect alludes to it and the prophets and books of God have also called people towards this path.

لِنَفْتِنَهُمْ فِيهِ وَمَنْ يُعْرِضْ عَنْ ذِكْرِ رَبِّهِ يَسْلُكْهُ عَذَابًا صَعَدًا<sup>16</sup>(١٧)

This is an on the spot admonition on a misconception that may arise. If the Almighty blesses someone with riches and affluence in this world, then he should not be misled by this act of benevolence and regard himself to be a favourite creature of God. The real purpose for this bestowal is to test that person whether he becomes grateful and obedient to the Almighty after receiving these favours or ends up as an ingrate and conceited person. The implication of this verse is that these conceited leaders of the Quraysh have forgotten this obvious reality; they regard these favours to be their right which they have inherited from their forefathers; inebriated with conceit and pride they show aversion to this Reminder which the Almighty had revealed to them to guide them to the right path.

The words وَمَنْ يُعْرِضْ عَنْ ذِكْرِ رَبِّهِ يَسْلُكْهُ عَذَابًا صَعَدًا sound a second admonition to the leaders of the Quraysh that those who evade the Reminder of their Lord by showing conceit on their worldly affluence should remember that the Almighty will cast them into an ever-increasing torment.

The word ذِكْرُ refers to the Qur'ān on the lack of recognition of which the Quraysh have been condemned earlier. This word is used to refer to the Qur'ān in many verses.

The expression عَذَابًا صَعَدًا has generally been translated as “extreme torment”. However, the real meaning of صَعَدًا is “to increase”. For this reason, I am inclined to think that the punishment of those whom the Almighty seizes because of the rejection of His prophet and Book is not transient; it is ever-increasing. They will have to face a much greater punishment in the Hereafter than the punishment they face in this world and then they will be made to pass through an ever-increasing torment. Never will it end or gradually lessen.

وَأَنَّ الْمَسَاجِدَ لِلَّهِ فَلَا تَدْعُوا مَعَ اللَّهِ أَحَدًا<sup>17</sup>(١٨)

In the previous verse, the address of the discourse was not direct. In this verse, the Quraysh are directly addressed and warned of the sanctity

16. So that We could test them by this, and those who turn away from the Reminder of their Lord, He will put them through an ever-increasing torment.

17. And that mosques are only for the worship of Allah so invoke not any one with Allah.

a mosque has in which no one but God is worshipped. This is a reminder of the belief of *tawhīd* which is part of the warning found in the previous verse. The implication is that when the Almighty will seize those who have turned away from His reminder, these alleged deities will not be able to save them; hence the Quraysh should not contaminate the mosque by worshipping them.

Since it is only the Almighty Who is worthy of being worshipped and no one else has this prerogative so mosques are reserved for God only as per the very purpose of building them. Neither can a mosque be built for someone other than God nor can someone other than Him be worshipped in it.

Here, the word مَسَاجِدَ (mosques) is not specified; however, since the addressees of this verse are the Quraysh, there is a strong indication that it refers to the Baytullāh. It is signified by a plural word because it is the direction in which all other mosques are built and in fact knits these mosques together, and secondly because it refers to all mosques. This very style is adopted in (١٧:٩) مَا كَانَ لِلْمُشْرِكِينَ أَنْ يَعْمُرُوا مَسَاجِدَ اللَّهِ. Here too the word connotes the Baytullāh; however, to let it remain a general directive, a plural word is used.

وَأَنَّهُ لَمَّا قَامَ عَبْدُ اللَّهِ يَدْعُوهُ كَادُوا يَكُونُونَ عَلَيْهِ لِبَدًا<sup>18</sup> (١٩)

It was only befitting that in the Baytullāh no one else's name be invoked other than that of the Almighty; on the contrary, when the Prophet (sws) stands up to worship the Almighty only, his opponents surround him from all sides.

The word لِبَدًا is the plural of لِبْدَةٌ which means something which is intertwined or something which is multi-layered. This verse depicts the fact that the concept of *tawhīd* has become alien in the very house that was built for the worship of the one and only God; when a servant of God stands to worship Him in it and recites *sūrahs* which contain the pure teachings of *tawhīd*, people regard him to be an alien or a mad person and encircle him from all sides. Precisely the same situation arises when he goes out to preach and recite before them the *sūrahs* which are based on *tawhīd*. At that time also, some miscreants besiege him and try to harass and humiliate him.

The expression عَبْدُ اللَّهِ refers to the Prophet (sws). The expression reflects affection as well as the reality that the most natural and logical attitude of a servant of God is to invoke God alone; however the

---

18. And that when this servant of Allah stands to invoke only Him, it seems as if they will rush upon him.



conscience of some people has become so perverted that the highest and noblest of deeds has become alien and aversive to them.

قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَدْعُو رَبِّي وَلَا أُشْرِكُ بِهِ أَحَدًا (٢٠)<sup>19</sup>

These verses guide the Prophet (sws) that however much these people should oppose him and express disgust, he should not care about them and clearly tell them that he will invoke God alone and not ascribe partners to Him even though they might regard these partners to have a great share in this partnership with God.

قُلْ إِنِّي لَا أَمْلِكُ لَكُمْ ضَرًّا وَلَا رَشَدًا (٢١)<sup>20</sup>

The Prophet (sws) is asked to convey to his opponents that if they feel an aversion to his message and they are not even ready to hear him out, then he has no remedy for them; he has been sent as one who invites people to the truth and not one who makes them forcibly accept it; neither is their harm or benefit under his control nor can he provide guidance to them or lead them astray; his only responsibility is to deliver the word of God and that is what he is doing; he has no further obligation. Here the unique style of the Qur'ān may be noted that because of parallelism after *رَشَدًا* the word *نَفْعًا* is suppressed and after *رَشَدًا*, the word *غَيًّا* is suppressed.

قُلْ إِنِّي لَنْ يُجِيرَنِي مِنَ اللَّهِ أَحَدٌ وَلَنْ أَجِدَ مِنْ دُونِهِ مُلْتَحَدًا (٢٢)<sup>21</sup>

This is a further explanation of what is said in the previous verse. The Prophet (sws) is told to inform his adversaries that if while trying to pamper them or being over-awed by them, he succumbs to associating someone with God then this would be imputing falsehood to God which is the greatest crime. He should also inform them that such is the punishment of this crime that no one will be able to give him refuge and asylum from the wrath of God.

إِلَّا بَلَاغًا مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرِسَالَاتِهِ وَمَن يَعْصِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَإِنَّ لَهُ نَارَ جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا (٢٣)<sup>22</sup>

This verse relates to verse twenty one above. The implication of the

19. Tell them: "I invoke my Lord only and will not associate partners with Him."

20. Tell them: "I have no authority to harm or benefit."

21. Tell them: "None can protect me from Allah nor can I find any refuge besides Him."

22. Only to inform you from God and to communicate His messages to you. And those who disobey Allah and His Prophet shall abide forever in the fire of Hell.

verse is that the Prophet (sws) can neither bring about the promised punishment at their demand nor forcibly guide them; his responsibility is only to communicate the message of God with full integrity of contents and to inform them of all the directives of God.

The word رِسَالَاتِهِ (His messages) is connected to بَلَاغًا (to inform). After بَلَاغٌ the purpose of addition of this word is to show that the responsibility of the Prophet (sws) is only to communicate the message of God in its exact form; apart from this communication, he can neither guide them or lead them astray and he also does not have the authority to alter the directives of God in the slightest way for their pleasure.

The words وَمَنْ يَعْصِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَإِنَّ لَهُ نَارَ جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدًا فِيهَا أَبَدًا express the fact that the Prophet (sws) is asked to tell them that after this communication he would have discharged his obligation. After this those who remain adamant in disobeying God and His Prophet (sws) should remember that for them is the fire of Hell in which they will dwell forever.

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا رَأَوْا مَا يُوعَدُونَ فَسَيَعْلَمُونَ مَنْ أَضْعَفُ نَاصِرًا وَأَقَلُّ عَدَدًا (٢٤)<sup>23</sup>

The implication is that today these people are very proud of their power but when they will see the promised punishment, then they will realize whether it is they who are frail and weak or the Prophet of God whose warnings they never gave any importance.

The words مَا يُوعَدُونَ (what they are being warned) encompass the punishment which is necessarily faced in this world by people who reject their prophet as well as the punishment which they will face in the Hereafter. The twenty fifth verse of the previous *sūrah*, Sūrah Nūḥ also discusses this aspect.

قُلْ إِنْ أَذْرِي أَقْرَبُ مِمَّا تُوعَدُونَ أَمْ يَجْعَلُ لَهُ رَبِّي أَمَدًا (٢٥)<sup>24</sup>

The opponents of the Prophet (sws) wanted to hasten the punishment which he was promising them and to pester him would inquire about the time of its arrival. In this verse, he is asked to inform such people that he has been sent only to inform people of its arrival; the exact time of its arrival is not known to him; it could be imminent and it could have been deferred by the Almighty.

23. Until these people behold that what they are being warned of; then they shall know who is the weakest in help and who is the fewest in numbers.

24. Tell them: "I do not know whether that with which you are being threatened is imminent or whether My Lord will postpone it a little more."

عَالِمُ الْغَيْبِ فَلَا يُظْهِرُ عَلَى غَيْبِهِ أَحَدًا (٢٦)<sup>25</sup>

There are certain facts of the unknown that are known only to God. The words عَلَى غَيْبِهِ does not refer to each and every fact of the unknown; it refers to those facts whose knowledge rests only with Him. For example, the time of the punishment of the Hereafter is only known to Him. He does not disclose such facts even to his angels and prophets.

إِلَّا مَنِ ارْتَضَىٰ مِنْ رَسُولٍ فَإِنَّهُ يَسْلُكُ مِنْ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِ رَصَدًا (٢٧) لِيَعْلَمَ أَن قَدْ أَبْلَغُوا رَسُولَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ وَأَحَاطَ بِمَا لَدَيْهِمْ وَأَحْصَىٰ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ عَدَدًا (٢٨)<sup>26</sup>

The implication of the verse is that it is not necessary that the Almighty inform his prophets whom He selects for this position of all the facts of the unknown world. It is not necessary for them to be aware of all such facts if they are to discharge their responsibility as prophets. However, the Almighty does guard them from all sides to see if they have faithfully delivered His directives.

The exception connoted by the particle إِلَّا can be understood if the following verse of Sūrah Ghāshiyah is kept in consideration:

فَذَكِّرْ إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ مُذَكِّرٌ لَسْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِمُسَيِّرٍ إِلَّا مَنْ تَوَلَّىٰ وَكَفَرَ فَيُعَذِّبُهُ اللَّهُ الْعَذَابَ الْأَكْبَرَ (٨٨: ٢١ - ٢٤)

Just remind them, for your duty is only to remind them; you are not to force them. As for he who turns away and denies, God will punish him gravely. (88:21-24)

In technical terms, such an exception is called the severed exception (*istithna' munqati'*); it is independent of the previous clause from which it seemingly creates an exception and is explained by an enunciative (*khabr*) which follows it.

The word يَعْلَمُ is in the same meaning as in (٣١:٤٧) نَعْلَمُ الْمُجَاهِدِينَ مِنْكُمْ and other verses of similar meaning. The word نَنْظُرُ is used in precisely this meaning in (١٠: ١٤) لِنَنْظُرَ كَيْفَ تَعْمَلُونَ. The Almighty has knowledge of all things; however, He wants the inner-self of a person to be revealed and that He is able to test him.

25. Only He knows the unknown, and He never reveals His unknown to anyone.

26. As for those whom He chooses as His Messengers, He guards them from behind and from the front that He may know if they have delivered the messages of their Lord; and He surrounds them from all sides and keeps count of all their things.

The sentence وَأَحَاطَ بِمَا لَدَيْهِمْ وَأَخْصَىٰ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ عَدَدًا implies that the Almighty fully protects the revelations He entrusts to His prophets and keeps count of every single thing He gives them. The smallest of things cannot escape this count.

With the help and grace of the Almighty, I come to the end of this *sūrah's tafsīr* فالحمد لله على إحسانه (so gratitude be on His favour).

Raḥmānābād

20<sup>th</sup> October 1978 AD

17<sup>th</sup> Dhū al-Qa‘dah 1398 AH

---